

IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

www.iowadnr.com

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LANDOWNERS SLOW TO LEARN ABOUT NEW CRP SIGN UP

DES MOINES – The general Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) sign up 26 is rapidly approaching its end date of May 30 and interested ag landowners are encouraged to talk to their Farm Service Agency representative or their local DNR private lands biologist to learn about the program.

“From a conservation standpoint, we are concerned that the word about the general CRP sign up is not getting out,” said Ken Herring, private lands program supervisor in the DNR’s wildlife bureau. “This program has an enormous effect on our state’s water quality and wildlife habitat.”

Herring said ag officials are uncertain about when the next general CRP sign up will occur and it may be as late as 2007 making this sign up even more crucial. In order to help explain the changes in this sign up versus previous one, the DNR is hosting landowner meetings over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN). Meetings are also scheduled on the local level by local FSA officers and other conservation partners.

The next meeting over the ICN is scheduled for 7 p.m. on May 16. The sites include the West Union Public Library, Hampton High School, Emmetsburg Community College, Sioux Center AEA, Storm Lake Community College, Grinnell High School, Tripoli High School, DeWitt-Central High School, Washington Community College, Adel High School, Ida Grove High School, Clarinda Community College, Lamoni High School and Albia Community College. In addition to landowners, the DNR is encouraging farm managers, county conservation staff and conservation contractors to attend the meetings and learn.

An ICN training is set for 7 p.m. May 19. Locations include Manchester High School, Garner High School, Fort Dodge Community College, Eldora Public Library, Grundy Center High School, Van Horn-Benton High School, Audubon High School, Whiting High School, Sidney High School, Mt. Ayr High School, Ottumwa Community College and Wapello High School.

The Iowa DNR has a page in the internet with information on the general CRP sign up 26. The information is updated frequently. Go to www.iowadnr.com and look under the reminders/news heading. This website also has links to the FSA CRP website.

For more information, contact Herring at 515-281-5529.

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IOWA MUSKIE STOCKINGS PROCEED ON SCHEDULE

By Lowell Washburn

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

SPIRIT LAKE--One of the state's most important trophy fisheries received a shot in the arm this week as thousands of advanced fingerling muskellunge were released into Iowa public waters. On average, this year's crop of muskie 'super fingerlings' are measuring a full 12.5 inches in length, making them excellent candidates for survival to adulthood, according to DNR Fisheries Research Biologist, Joe Larschied.

"A central goal of our muskie stocking program is to provide the Iowa angler with a unique opportunity to catch a true trophy fish -- or even the fish of lifetime," said Larschied.

"Consequently, we maintain our muskie populations at relatively low densities when compared to other predator species. In essence, the muskie program is intended to be a [catch and release] trophy fishery, not a [catch and eat] meat fishery."

The Spirit Lake State Fish Hatchery is the birthplace for the tiny dart-shaped, baby muskellunge that will one day become the trophies of which angling dreams are made.

According to Spirit Lake hatchery manager Donna Muhm, the tiny muskie fry are introduced to a diet of high protein, dry feed on about their tenth day of life. When the fish reach a length of 4-inches, they are switched to live minnows which fisheries personnel net from area ponds and deliver to the hatchery for the remainder of the summer.

"Our fingerlings thrive on the live minnow diet and by October they usually measure from 9 1/2 to 10-inches in length," said Mumm.

"At that point, the advanced fingerlings are moved south to artificial holding ponds at the Rathbun State Fish Hatchery. Fisheries personnel continue to provide live feed throughout the winter and by spring the fingerlings have usually added another three inches or so to their length," Mumm added.

In early to mid-May, the young muskies are recaptured for stocking across the state. At seven or eight years of age, the survivors will have reached the legal, 40-inch length.

"Part of our overall goal is to establish a population density of one adult, thirty-inch plus muskellunge for every seven to ten surface acres of water," said Larschied.

"With that sort of a population, we can provide anglers with a pretty phenomenal trophy fishery. In the Iowa Great Lakes, for example, we are currently seeing muskie catch rates that actually match the objectives of Wisconsin's best Blue Ribbon waters," said Larschied.

"In essence, we're providing a totally unique fishery."

According to Mumm, around 3,000 to 4,000 advanced muskie fingerlings are stocked in Iowa each year. The fingerlings are divided between Spirit Lake, West Okoboji, Clear Lake, Pleasant Creek, Hawthorn Lake, Big Creek, Three Mile Lake, and Brushy Creek. Each lake receives fingerling stockings on an 'every other year' basis. However, the vast majority of Iowa produced muskies are traded to other states for catfish, smallmouth bass, or other gamefish species which are ultimately stocked into Iowa waters.

"There's no question that our muskie culture has become much more efficient over time," said Larschied.

"At Spirit Lake, for example, we used to release around 1,900 smaller, totally pellet reared fingerlings per year. At best, our success could only be described as fair. Today, we're only releasing 850 advanced fingerlings every other year and are providing a true world class fishery. It was all a matter of stocking a higher quality product," said Larschied.

"A classic example of just how much excitement a trophy muskie can create occurred on Clear Lake just last week when 6-year-old William Elston hooked and landed a 50-incher on the lake's eastern shore," said DNR Fisheries Biologist, Jim Wahl.

"A fish like that always turns heads and is a trophy anywhere in North America. But when a six-year-old hooks into a monster like that, it becomes a real story. The town has been buzzing ever since."

Iowa's current state record muskellunge is a 52.5-inch, 50.4 pound lunker landed in August of 2000 at Spirit Lake by Kevin Cardwell."

The previous state record was a 45-pound, 9-ounce, 52-incher taken from Spirit Lake in 1995. That fish was the largest muskellunge taken anywhere in North America that year.

"Fish like that speak very highly for the quality of our Iowa muskie fishery," said Larschied.

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EARLY CRAPPIES AND EARLY CAMPING

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It's hard to see what caused more excitement in the last week, free camping or crappies that almost jumped into your bucket. On second thought, the free state park camping was limited to the number of sites available. No such limit on crappie anglers.

"There were still quite a few out (last Wednesday)," confirms retired fisheries biologist—but active fisherman—Bob Middendorf, of Solon. "They'll spawn at about 60 degrees water temperature. It was about 58 today. The female crappies are full of eggs, waiting to spawn, but they'll hold off until we get a little more sun and rising temperatures."

In the meantime, the pre-spawn 'bite' is in full swing. The Macbride spillway into Coralville Reservoir usually has a big knot of boat fishermen and shore anglers crossing lines from dawn, well into day. Even I wedged an hour or so of free time this week to break off a few jigs. Fishing from shore, I picked up a half dozen eight-inch crappies on small jig/minnow combinations. When it *did* drop where I wanted it—at the far edge of the submerged branches—I often had a crappie on the line.

Fighting through the overhead branches and around submerged trees, though, was a vivid reminder that being out on the lake makes things a whole lot easier. "We could just maneuver the boat over the brush and vertical jig the crappies right out," reminds Middendorf. "They are a lot more mobile than being on shore." While I was keeping minnows on the hook, he had just as much luck with small tubes and twister tails. Middendorf and a partner tossed most of them back, but kept a couple dozen each day; enough to eat, but not so many that cleaning them is a major chore.

Macbride has a surplus of the seven to nine inch crappies, all going on four-years of age. Those that escape becoming a fish fry this year should mean a pretty good 2004,

when they are 10 to 11 inches; which is what most anglers consider prime crappie fishing.

Good crappie lakes around Iowa are seeing crowds right about now; though it does spread and then ebb, from south to north. Rains upstream from the bigger reservoirs, such as Coralville, have flushed a big load of muddy, cooler water into them. That slows crappie catching, until the water settles.

Some campers combined crappies and the free overnight stay provided by the Department of Natural Resources last weekend. "It'll be walleyes (Friday) and crappies Saturday and Sunday," offered Doug Clark of Bellevue. He and two others were hurriedly setting up tents in Lake Macbride State Park, so they get out on the water.

Others had morel hunting, or just relaxing in mind. "We like the outdoors; the birds; everything about nature," laughed Rollie Donovan of Iowa City. He was tending pork chops on the campsite fire pit, while his wife, Darleen, got the rest of lunch ready inside their small trailer. "We are usually out this time of year anyway," said Donovan. "We knew it was free camping, but we just like to camp."

Macbride had just a couple openings in the 50 campsites on the north or 'modern' side. The south 'primitive' camping area was about half full for the free weekend. "We made a lot of people happy—giving them their money back. Some didn't realize it was free camping," offered park ranger Gwen Prentice. The no-charge weekend is early by design, to attract park users before the 'peak' summer months. "Ahead of Memorial Day, and especially on weekdays, we have a lot fewer people camping," said Prentice. "The weather's nice. It's warm during the day, cool at night. It's perfect for campfires." Prices at state parks in the spring and again after Labor Day are \$3 per site cheaper than during the traditional summer camping season.

A fish identification program on Saturday night drew a couple dozen campers. A Sunday morning bird hike kept another 10 busy. Prentice says Macbride will have a summer naturalist, within a couple weeks, hired through the Americorps program. "She will be doing everything from bird hikes to plant identification; different programs for kids. There should be something going on every weekend at one of the campgrounds."

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NEW SAFETY CERTIFICATION REQUIRED FOR YOUNG PWC OPERATORS

DES MOINES – Personal watercraft (PWC) operators 12 through 17 years old are required to have successfully completed a certified boating safety course before they can legally operate a PWC on public waters. This newly required certification is a response to a dramatic increase in the number of crashes involving PWCs and young operators.

Rod Slings, recreational safety program supervisor for the DNR, said the certification process can be handled three ways, as a home study course, over the internet, or in a classroom. Either the Power Squadron or the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary offers the classroom course.

“The online version will be the most logical way to go if you’re leaving on a Friday and need to take the test,” Slings said. “After you submit your test answers you will know if you successfully passed the test or not. If you passed, you can print a temporary certification card and you can get out on the water.”

The internet option does cost a little more - \$15 versus \$5 for the mail-in version – but that is the cost for convenience. The boating course and test covers all aspects of boating including how to pass another boat, what different marker buoys mean to night navigation and emergencies.

The boating information is available at www.iowadnr.com then click on conservation law enforcement. Failure to have a certificate of completion will result in a ticket.

For more information, contact your local Recreational Safety Officer.

For Lyon, Osceola, Dickinson, Emmet, Kossuth, Sioux O’Brien, Clay, Palo Alto, Plymouth Cherokee, Buena Vista, Woodbury, Ida and Sac, contact Marty Eby at 712-260-1036.

For Howard, Winneshiek, Allamakee, Chickasaw, Bremer, Fayette, Clayton, Black Hawk, Buchanan, Delaware, Dubuque, Tama, Benton, Linn, Jones and Jackson, contact Pat Jorgensen at 319-240-8640.

For Monona, Crawford, Carroll, Greene, Harrison, Shelby, Audubon, Guthrie, Pottawattamie, Cass, Adair, Mills, Montgomery, Adams, Union, Fremont, Page, Taylor and Ringgold, contact Dale Anderson at 712-250-0302.

For Iowa, Johnson, Cedar, Clinton, Keokuk, Washington, Muscatine, Scott, Louisa, Jefferson, Henry, Des Moines, Van Buren and Lee, contact Craig Jackson at 319-357-1812.

For Winnebago, Worth, Mitchell, Hancock, Cerro Gordo, Floyd, Pocahontas, Humboldt, Wright, Franklin, Butler, Calhoun, Webster, Hamilton, Hardin, Grundy, Boone, Story and Marshall, contact Rod Slings at 515-281-8652.

For Dallas, Polk, Jasper, Poweshiek, Madison, Warren, Marion, Mahaska, Clarke, Lucas, Monroe, Wapello, Decatur, Wayne, Appanoose and Davis, contact Allen Crouse at 515-238-4955.

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IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of May 13, 2003

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northeast

Mississippi River: The gates are open at Guttenberg and the water is expected to rise throughout the week. The water is stained due to run-off from heavy rains this past weekend and water temperature is holding steady at 59 degrees. High, stained water put a damper on fishing this week, but some fish are still being caught. Bluegills can still be found around the water's edge with most people using bobbers and night crawlers. Freshwater drum are biting well in the tailwaters of **Locks 9 and 10**. These fish are easy to catch using a sliding sinker and night crawlers. In **Pools 9-11**, fishing has been good for smallmouth bass, but high water may hinder the bite a bit. Look for rocky areas such as riprap or natural rock outcrops. Spinner baits fished next to the shore can catch these hardy fish. Water levels in **Pools 12-15** are rising and expected to raise another three feet by the end of the week. Water clarity is getting worse. Prior to the recent rains, freshwater drum were good on night crawlers in the tailwaters and side channels. Some crappies are biting on minnows. Channel catfish are good on night crawlers suspended under a bobber in the flooded vegetation. A few largemouth bass are biting on spinner baits fished in the backwater areas. **Pool 13** – Middle Sabula Lake is fair to good for crappies on jigs or minnows floated under a bobber.

South Prairie Lake and East Lake (Black Hawk): Crappie fishing is good using wax worm or minnows fished under a slip bobber around brush piles.

George Wyth Lake (Black Hawk): Largemouth bass can be found hanging tight to the woody structure.

Casey Lake (Tama): This lake is good for bluegill and crappie using jigs tipped with wax worms fished near woody structure.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Crappie and perch fishing are good on minnows floated under a bobber or small jigs.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek) and Lake Hendricks (Howard): Crappie fishing is fair to good on jigs tipped with a minnow or tube jigs. Largemouth bass are hitting crank baits.

Due to localized heavy rains this past weekend, **trout** stream conditions vary, but should continue to improve as the week progresses. Fishing has been very good on Waterloo and French Creeks in far northeast Iowa. For current trout stocking information, contact the Big Spring Hatchery at 563-245-1699, Decorah Hatchery at 563-382-3315 or Manchester Hatchery at 563-927-5736. You can also view the trout stocking calendar on-line by going to www.iowadnr.com, clicking on **Fish and Fishing** and then choosing **Favorite Pages**.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Crappies are being caught at Templar and Buffalo Run. Bullheads are biting on night crawlers at the North Grade. Smallmouth bass are still being caught on the rocks. Walleye are being caught on the east side with some action around Marble Beach. Most walleye are caught during the night and just before daylight. Leeches, night crawlers and minnows are all working. There is some daylight activity using spinners with night crawlers or leeches. Some wade-in anglers are catching nice walleyes after 10 p.m. on jigs and minnows. Remember to check the fishing regulations for information on walleyes. Anglers are catching some northern pike on spinners tipped with night crawlers or leeches.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Crappies are biting at the trestle, Triboji, the harbor and in the canals. The best baits are a slip bobber and small crappie jig tipped with wigglers. Walleyes are being caught on crankbaits in 8 to 10-feet of water. The walleyes are definitely on the late night bite. Remember to check the regulations when fishing walleye.

East Okoboji (Dickinson): Anglers are catching bullheads at the north end. Walleye fishing is fair to good trolling crankbaits. Some sorting is necessary for keeper sized walleyes.

Minnewashta (Dickinson): Anglers are catching a few bluegills.

Center Lake (Dickinson): Walleye fishing is sporadic. Drifting live bait, pulling crankbaits or fishing leeches with a lighted bobber are all good choices.

Silver Lake (Dickinson): Good numbers of keeper sized walleyes are available. Currently, the bite has been hit or miss; however, on a good night, anglers will be quite satisfied.

Lost Island Lake (Clay and Palo Alto): Persistence and patience has rewarded anglers with nice catches of walleye.

Silver Lake (Palo Alto): Good numbers of bullheads are biting.

Elk Lake (Clay): Anglers are catching good numbers of bullheads.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Walleye fishing has slowed. Anglers are drift fishing or trolling live bait rigs. Yellow bass fishing is excellent on nicer days. The best action occurs when there is a slight chop of the water. Small jigs, minnows or cut bait are all catching yellow bass in the 8 to 11-inch range. Fish the Island, Dodge's Point, Billy's reef and the outlet. Bullhead fishing is excellent. Use night crawlers on the windy shorelines or the Ventura Grade fishing jetty. Bullhead sizes are excellent.

Lower and Upper Pine lakes (Hardin): Crappie fishing is good along the outside edges of downed trees. Use small jigs and minnows around the brush.

Rice Lake (Winnebago): Fishing is excellent for 7 to 10-inch bullheads.

Silver Lake (Worth): Bullhead fishing is good using night crawlers off the fishing jetty.

Briggs Woods (Hamilton): Largemouth bass are hitting spinner baits and jigs along the vegetation edges. Bluegills are biting on small pieces of night crawlers and small jigs.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Fishing is good for nice sized bullheads all over the lake. Walleye fishing is good to excellent on leeches. Channel catfish are good on shad entrails.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Walleye fishing is good for wade in and boat anglers. White twisters and drifting live bait rigs has been good.

North Twin (Calhoun): Walleye and crappie fishing has been fair in the early morning hours.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Green Valley (Union): Anglers are catching big crappies in the rocks and in 5 to 8-feet of water.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Crappies are being caught along the dam. Bluegills are being caught in the flooded trees near the mouths of coves and channel catfish in the upper end on night crawlers.

Binder Lake (Adams): Anglers are catching 8 to 11-inch crappies and yellow bass along the dam.

Loch Ayr (Ringgold): Anglers are catching 7 to 11-inch crappies along the dam.

Three Mile (Union): Anglers are catching walleyes on points and over the fish mounds. Channel catfish are being caught at north end and in shallow bays on night crawlers. Fishing is good for crappies in 4 to 8 feet of water over rock areas. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish is good at north end. Walleye fishing is good along the face of the dam. Crappies are moving into rocks and trees near shore on the west side of the lake. Anglers are catching lots of yellow bass. Largemouth bass fishing is good.

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie fishing is good using tube jigs around structure.

Cold Springs (Cass): Crappies are good using jigs/minnows along shore.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Crappie fishing is good along shore and rock riprap.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Crappie and bluegill fishing is good along shallows and lagoons on jigs and minnows. Anglers are picking up a few bullheads and channel catfish.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is excellent for 7-inch crappies on jigs and minnows along the dam.

Nodaway (Adair): Crappies are biting on jigs/minnows along the face of the dam.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Crappie fishing is fair for large crappies.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is good for 7-inch crappies on jigs/minnows around rocks and woody structure. Channel catfish are being caught on liver.

Willow (Harrison): Crappie fishing is good using jigs and minnows.

Big Creek Lake (Polk): Walleye fishing has been good to excellent using lead-headed jigs and minnows. Best times are early and late. Most fish are below the 15-inch legal size limit. Crappie fishing has been good using jigs. Fish are moving into shallower water, with the better fishing in water 10 to 15 feet deep. Bluegill fishing has also picked up, try around rocky areas and near woody structure. Channel catfish fishing has been good, with 2 to 3-pound fish taken.

Don Williams (Boone): Crappie fishing is good, with fish in 15 to 18-feet of water. Largemouth bass fishing has been good using top-water lures around shoreline structure.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill and redear fishing has been good, with fish caught using night crawlers or wax worms. Crappies are being caught using crappie jigs and/or wax worms or worms. Largemouth bass – primarily sub-legalized fish – are being caught on crankbaits.

Hooper Lake (Warren): Bluegill and redear have been caught using traditional baits and lures. Some largemouth bass are being caught on crankbaits, although as in Lake Ahquabi, most fish are sub-legal.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Crappie fishing has been excellent from shore and boat using jigs and minnows. Most fish are 9 to 10 inches. Largemouth bass fishing has been good using top-water lures.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappies have been caught using jigs and wax worms. Largemouth bass have been taken along the face of the dam, and walleyes have been caught off the dam and around the island.

Hickory Grove Lake (Story): Crappie fishing has picked up using jigs/minnows.

Saylorville Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has been good in the marina area. Most anglers are using micro-jigs and wax worms, or bobbers and minnow combinations.

Lake Red Rock (Marion): Crappie and white bass/wiper fishing has been good in the tailwater from Lake Red Rock using jigs and/or minnows. Crappie fishing has been slow to fair near the Highway 14 Bridge.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River – Pools 16 – 19: Water levels on the Mississippi River are on the rise again. River stage at Muscatine is 10.7 feet, and is expected to climb slowly to 12.3 feet over the next few days. Weekend rains and cold weather has dropped water temperatures into the low 60s. Fishing has been slow but shows signs of beginning to pick up. Catfish fishing is slow to fair on cut bait and chicken liver. Bluegill and crappie fishing is slow to fair in backwater areas on Pools 17 and 18.

Lake Darling (Washington): Recent rains have muddied up the water a little. Lots of nice bass and channel catfish are in the shallow water feeding on the immature crappies. The bigger crappies were starting to move into the shallows late last week. Recent water testing in the beach area has turned up no problems.

Lake Geode (Henry): Water is going over the spillway. As always, the water is still fairly clear. The crappies are starting to pile up around the submerged trees.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): The lake is very high and muddy. The Toolesboro road was closed on Saturday and may be reopened later this week.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been biting on small jigs and minnows in shallow water areas. Channel catfish have been hitting on night crawlers and cut bait.

Lake Miami (Monroe): Crappies and bluegills have been hitting on small jigs and minnows.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Crappies and bluegills have moved into shallow water and are hitting on small jigs. Largemouth bass and walleyes continue to hit on crankbaits fished in deeper water.

Lake Wapello (Davis): Bluegills and crappies have been biting on small jigs tipped with a wax worm or a chunk of night crawler. Largemouth bass have been hitting on a variety of artificial presentations.

Coralville Reservoir (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been slow with varying water temperatures and poor water quality. Anglers are picking up a few crappies below Macbride Dam and below Coralville Dam. An occasional white bass is also being caught. Channel catfishing has been fair throughout the reservoir.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing has been good around brush piles on jigs with or without minnows and slip bobber rigs. An occasional walleye and bluegill is also being caught.

Diamond Lake (Poweshiek): Crappie fishing has been fair off the deeper brush piles on jigs. Crappies and bluegill fishing should pick up in the shallows with warmer temperatures. Anglers are reminded that minnow use is prohibited.

Lake Iowa (Iowa): Bluegill and crappie fishing has been fair throughout the lake and around brush piles off the shore and from the boat.

Pleasant Creek (Linn): An occasional crappie and bluegill has been caught in deeper water on brush piles and pallet structures on jigs and minnows.

Iowa River (Louisa): The river is high and muddy. Some flooding is forecasted for the Wapello area.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): Last week's storms have brought the river up to about bank full with some minor flooding forecasted for this week.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

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